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More or Less Vulnerable?

Variation in the Extent to Which Mainstream Political Parties' Voters Consider Voting for Radical Right Populist Parties

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Abstract

West European party systems have undergone profound changes, one of the most obvious being a marked decrease in vote share going to the mainstream parties whose domination of electoral politics used to be taken for granted, along with an increase in votes going to more radical, populist contenders—most (but not all) of them on the anti-immigrant right. These two changes are widely assumed to be linked. Yet the potential impact of the populist radical right on the electoral performance of (western) Europe's other party families may well be uneven. We use European Election Study survey data to explore which parties (and party families) might be most vulnerable to seeing their voters defect to the populist radical right. We find that, although it has become commonplace to observe that it is the social democratic centre-left which is most vulnerable in this respect, it is actually centre-right parties which, at this point anyway, would seem to have most to lose. But they are not alone: interestingly, the voters of radical left parties are also vulnerable to the appeal of the radical right.

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Introduction

Almost 65 years ago the German-American political scientist Otto Kirchheimer observed a fundamental shift within US and Western European politics (1954, 1965, 1966). His main argument was that the main ideological divisions between the political left and right were rapidly disappearing and all major parties were transforming into ideologically bland, centrist 'catch-all' parties, appealing to the same broad swathe of middle-class voters and increasingly detached from the interests they came into politics to represent. Kirchheimer (1966) was disillusioned by the disappearance of ideological antagonisms between the major political forces in France, the UK and the United States, but was particularly disappointed by the disappearance of 'principled opposition' in Germany. A thorough analysis of Kirchheimer's oeuvre (Krouwel 2003, 2012) reveals that he saw this transformation of political parties as a much broader and more profound change—one that went beyond just ideological convergence. And that change has continued apace, even accelerating in recent decades, thus posing a variety of organisational challenges to parties and even a threat to their legitimacy (see Scarrow et al. 2017; Ignazi 2017).

Kirchheimer may have been prescient but he was not omniscient: several of his predictions failed to come true. Indeed, in some respects the opposite unfolded. While Kirchheimer was infuriated by the centripetal movement of major parties in the West, particularly of the SPD in Germany, recent decades have actually witnessed severe polarisation between political parties over many important issues and policies—most obviously, perhaps, on questions relating to the social integration of ethnic and religious minorities with origins as immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers (Kriesi et al. 2008), which resulted in the shake-up of previously stable party systems by successful, newly established anti-immigration parties (Berbuir et al. 2015). However, such centrifugal patterns of party competition are not only visible on the cultural-identity dimension, but also on core issues on the economic dimension such as the size and structure of the welfare state, healthcare coverage, pensions, budgetary austerity and taxation (Treib 2014; Streeck and Schäfer 2013; Otjes and Krouwel 2018). Moreover, the last decade or two has seen the emergence of new—often radical, extremist and populist—parties at the ideological fringes (see, for example, Akkerman et al. 2016; García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018). Kirchheimer assumed, incorrectly, that post-war prosperity would see large sections of the middle class become a moderate voter base for centrist parties. In fact, right across Europe, we can see anxious and often angry 'baby-boomers'—'squeezed', as they are between austerity, rising house prices, decreased opportunities for upward social mobility and

higher education costs for their offspring (Antonucci et al. 2017; Kurer and Palier 2019)—shift their political allegiance from the traditional parties to these anti-immigrant and sometimes openly 'anti-system' parties (Otjes and Krouwel 2017). Rather than what Kirchheimer assumed would be a 'closing of the electoral market' by a party cartel, we see increasing electoral volatility and many new parties fragmenting European party systems. Instead of traditional centrist parties having broad popular support and large parliamentary majorities, we see the voter base of Christian democratic and social democratic parties shrink to an unprecedented low, with radical and extremist newcomers achieving huge electoral successes.

Meanwhile, at the societal level, we witness an unprecedented erosion of institutional trust and political participation, denoting a shift away from an active and informed citizenry with high levels of political interest and strong attachments to political parties towards more passive consumption of politics (Kutiyski et al. 2019). As political parties no longer aim to clearly identify and articulate the political interests of the various social groups, voters become mere clients of parties and simply consume—rather than co-produce—their political 'products' (Wolfsfeld 2011; Lilleker and Scullion 2008). Modern campaigns segment voters into small electoral markets that can be micro-targeted with customised messages and marketing techniques, creating a sense of connection and representation. Increasingly, modern parties recruit candidates from the world of entertainment and professional media or from within politics itself. They create personalised and strategic political messages, rather than substantive and transformative policy proposals. Members become less and less important—and numerous—with moves to boost intraparty democracy often empowering leaders as much as activists (see van Haute and Gauja 2015; Cross and Katz 2013). Voters almost become viewers of a 'political game show' in which they can have only a limited role—that of filling the stands, picking a side and cheering on their favourite entertainer (Vos and van Aelst 2017; Poguntke and Webb 2007).

The acme of such developments is surely Geert Wilders' PVV in the Netherlands. The 'party' is non-existent: it essentially comprises a single individual. Nobody—not even its parliamentary representatives—can join the party organisation. Indeed, it has no formal membership structure. There is no internal democratic procedure for policy formation, leadership selection or drafting of the party platform, and all decisions are taken by the party leader, who is the only formal member. No membership means no internal debate on policies or strategy, no means to democratically control the party leadership or two hold the leadership accountable. It is merely an election machine with a financial structure, ergo a vehicle for the party leader himself. Donald Trump is another example of what the future of electoral politics may look like. Taking advantage

of the open primary structure within the Republican Party, using modern e-technologies to reach voters and relying on professional and capital-intensive campaigning, Trump, a professional showman/entertainer with decades of experience in creating media attention and reputation, mobilised a voter base with an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim agenda and anxiety about economic competition due to globalised markets (see Donovan and Bowler 2018). Meanwhile, in Europe Ukrainians voted for an actor famous for playing their president in a TV series.

In many countries, the traditional parties on both the centre-left and centre-right are evidently struggling to adapt to or counter the challenge posed by these newcomers, with some of them adopting the issue positions and rhetoric of populist challengers, while others, at least for a while, resist so doing (see Bale et al. 2010; see also Zaslove and Wolinetz 2018; see also Wagner and Mayer 2017). Things are made even trickier in some countries by populist politicians becoming nested within the traditional parties—the FPÖ and ÖVP in Austria, Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland are cases in point, as is Trump in the USA—resulting in those parties being essentially 'taken over' by populist entrepreneurs, leaving the other parties having to decide whether to adopt or at least adapt to their agendas, or else to try to make a pariah of their 'born again' opponents. This dilemma can then trigger seemingly insurmountable internal rifts, as the UK's Conservative Party has recently found after its holding of an in-out referendum on Europe. Intended to relieve the pressure it had been facing from UKIP, this instead blew up in its face, resulting in a whole series of secondary explosions as it became evident that leaving without damaging the country's economy was not going to be as easy as many of its members had assumed.

Yet if the electoral challenge presented by populist parties seems nigh-on universal, and universally difficult to cope with, that does not necessarily mean that its impact will be the same on each and every one of its opponents. While all of them are understandably worried, might it not be the case that some parties (and party families) may have rather more cause for concern than others? Are they, at least in theory, more exposed to the possibility of losing their voters to populist parties than other parties—something we refer to as vulnerability?

In this article we assess the extent to which different political parties of various ideological origins are truly facing an electoral challenge from populist challengers. Which political parties are likely to be most affected and which might be relatively immune? In this study we look at all significant individual parties in each party system, as well as at party families (the radical socialist left, the environmental greens, the social democrats, the Christian democrats, liberals and the conservative parties) across Europe. We devote particular attention to the party

families that traditionally dominated European party systems—the Christian democrats, conservatives and social democrats. In addition, we also explicitly discuss the vulnerability and coping strategies of liberal parties, since most of the new and 'reborn' populist parties, at least of the anti-immigration kind we are interested here, have emerged from or within the (centre-) right of the political spectrum. We then conclude with some observations on how traditional parties might survive the forces of populist mobilisation and a media landscape characterised by 'fake-news' and 'fact-free' politics or whether—unthinkable as it might have been just a few years ago—they will simply perish as political actors of any significance.

The Electoral Vulnerability of Party Families to the Populist Challenge

Most readers will be familiar with evidence of the electoral decline of the major mainstream political parties. In most European countries, members of traditional party families have suffered electoral defeats in recent elections and this electoral demise coincides with the emergence of successful anti-immigration populist mobilisation. Over the three most recent decades we can see a clear downward trend for Christian democrats and social democrats (Bale and Krouwel 2015; Keating and McCrone 2013). Centre-right liberal and some conservative parties have, in most countries, outperformed the traditional moderate centre-left, yet have also seen a weakening of voter support and loyalty. However, many centre-right parties have also used the economic crisis that ensued in 2007 as an electoral opportunity to shift their emphasis to immigration in their campaigns. Downes and Loveless (2018) have shown that particularly non-incumbent centre-right parties can benefit electorally from emphasising immigration, even outperforming the radical populist right. The centre-left has a much harder time finding an answer to the increased saliency of cultural issues, in particular immigration. In many recent elections across Europe, parties belonging to the more radical political currents—anti-immigrant populists, the radical socialist left and environmentalist parties—have seen their electoral fortunes rise.

Clearly, if any attempt has been made by traditional parties to form a cartel (Katz and Mair 1995), it has failed badly. In recent decades, European party system change has accelerated and many national political landscapes in European democracies have been dramatically reshaped. Outsider parties have been able to appeal to significant sections of the electorate over the last two decades (Pelizzo 2007) and many new parties have been able to disrupt any attempt at cartelisation

(Hino 2012). Most importantly, voters that have for decades supported the centre-left and centre-right are abandoning their traditional parties for new parties that offer either economic or cultural protection, or both (Otjes and Krouwel 2018).

As this analysis of electoral performance makes clear, mainstream political parties of the moderate left and right have become electorally the most vulnerable as core voter groups that previously supported centrists for decades are increasingly defecting to radical alternatives, particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hobolt 2016). Contrary to expectations in the 1990s that a liberal consensus was in the making, we see instead that illiberal forces are gaining strength and radical populist competitors are ripping mainstream, centrist politics apart. But does this mean that all parties are equally vulnerable to populist mobilisation? Not necessarily. In fact, we should surely expect variation in the ways and the extent to which political parties of different ideological orientation across Europe are affected, depending, for instance, on differences in the number and type of populist parties emerging in each national party system, the traditional electoral coalition of the centre-left and centre-right, and the response of all parties to the populist challenge.

Variation in Vulnerability of Party Families to the Populist Challenge

On the face of it, the hybrid appeal of anti-immigrant populists—by offering 'left-wing' economic protection and 'right-wing' cultural protection—potentially constitutes a threat to both the mainstream centre-left and centre-right political parties. Mainstream political parties are vulnerable electorally in the sense that they risk losing voters to either new or very outspoken challengers who have more freedom to undertake the 'strategic manoeuvring' required to attract new supporters (Cole 2005). In particular, mainstream parties that have often taken on governmental responsibility and have a reputation for sensible, prudent and moderate policy stances are much less capable of adopting radical policy positions or making total policy U-turns over short time spans. Moreover, mainstream moderate 'people's parties' are often 'broad churches', hosting various factions or currents that represent a wide array of interests. Overly-sharp movements in any policy area might upset carefully constructed compromises that are acceptable to the multiple interests and factions that the party incorporates. Repositioning themselves might provoke internal conflict, which could become so severe that it threatens to split the party. In many cases, populist radical right parties are already breakaways from the established centre-right, in particular liberal and

conservative parties. Thus, the presence of such parties themselves constitutes a clear reminder of the fragility of the mainstream traditional right.

But while the origin of populist anti-immigrant parties is mostly a rift within the centre-right, this does not automatically mean that these parties are the ones that will suffer most electorally. The argument here is that both sides of the traditional left-right divide are at least potentially vulnerable due to a shift from 'class' voting vis-à-vis 'cultural' voting (Van der Waal et al. 2007; see also Betz 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008). Across Europe, we see that an educational divide is becoming more pronounced than the class divide that previously structured political behaviour. The transformation of the class structure, as well as direct competition from populists in terms of the economic and cultural 'protection' of the native population, are good grounds to suspect that said electoral damage will also be inflicted on the political left (Bale et al. 2010). After all, both 'latent' (John and Margetts 2009) and actual voters for the anti-immigration populists are just as likely to be drawn from the ranks of lower-income and poorly-educated people—who have traditionally voted for the left on socio-economic grounds—as they are to come from the ranks of the 'old' middle class (see Rydgren 2007, p. 249; Rydgren 2012; Plasser and Ulram 2000). Even if those who defect from the mainstream of the political spectrum to its extremes do so initially only to register a protest vote—a comforting illusion to which conventional politicians still cling despite research that clearly contradicts it (Van der Brug et al. 2005b)—a sizable proportion of these lost sheep may never return to the fold.

But are the centre-right and centre-left particularly vulnerable to populist rivalry compared to other party families? One could argue that two party families on the left, the Greens and social liberals (or libertarians) are practically invulnerable to the appeal of populists, because 'their' voters, as well as being more likely to come from the 'new' middle class and be well-educated, share few if any ideological values in common with populist radical right parties, save perhaps a certain anti-system sentiment and enthusiasm for more direct forms of democracy, respectively. However, the two party families of the traditional left—the left-wing socialists—are potentially more vulnerable. Voters for radical left parties, who are more likely to stress their socio-economically leftist rather than their left-libertarian credentials (see March 2011), are likely to be overrepresented in the ranks of the lower-paid and more poorly-educated. This is precisely the demographic whose lack of cultural capital may predispose them to, for example, the anti-immigrant message of the populist 'right', especially if that message is combined with, say, welfare chauvinism and anti-establishment rhetoric (see Van Kessel and Krouwel 2011).

Of course, that same message may well prove just as attractive to working-class people who would 'normally' vote for more centrist social democratic parties—these parties have to somehow come up with a platform that will simultaneously appeal not just to relatively authoritarian workers and the relatively liberal (public sector) middle-class but also to the ethnic minorities, which have often been incorporated into the core voter base. Schmidtke (2016) has shown that social democrats are particularly vulnerable to populist challengers as they appeal to the traditional working- and (lower) middle-class base with four immigration 'frames'. First, the identity frame depicts immigrants as 'fremdkörper' that threaten traditional cultural norms and values, undermining the traditional social order. Second, the security frame associates unregulated immigration with crime, terrorism, fundamentalism and political radicalism. In addition, the interest frame highlights the costs versus benefits of immigration, where migration is seen as an enormous burden on the welfare state, as 'undeserving' immigrants are seen as disproportionally benefiting from welfare arrangements. Scarcity of welfare resources is not blamed on financial austerity or retrenchment of the welfare state, but on the newcomers, who have not sufficiently contributed to the economy but are nevertheless entitled to the benefits.

Social democrats that traditionally defend universal access to welfare state arrangements become particularly vulnerable to being blamed for insufficient and inadequate public assistance. Additionally, social democrats often emphasise—with good reason, but with detrimental electoral effects, that immigration is necessary for the sustainability of the welfare state, as well as for economic competitiveness and growth. However, many lower- and middle-class voters tend to disagree, instead perceiving the existence of an 'unfair' system that discriminates against the native population, and political elites that overemphasise the social and political rights of immigrant populations by pointing to structural discrimination and exploitation. It is precisely this disconnect between the perception of many within the traditional voter base and the 'libertarian' rhetoric of the leadership of social-democratic parties, combined with the particular mix of voters in terms of 'cultural and class' background traditionally supporting the centre-left, that might make social democrats very vulnerable indeed to the populist challenge.

Meanwhile, on the moderate right, Christian Democratic parties are also electorally vulnerable because these confessional parties are often 'broad churches' that mobilise voters from across the social-class spectrum, often by subtle and implicit (sometimes explicit) references to religious scripture and principles. The fact that Christian democrats represent a broad social coalition ranging from captains of industry, entrepreneurs, small shop owners, farmers and white-collar

professionals to working-class voters forces them to adopt centrist positions on the economic dimension. This moderation makes it more difficult and illogical to adopt radical positions on the cultural, authoritarian-libertarian dimension. Religion becomes an even more complicating factor since zealous voters might be attracted by the anti-Islamic stances of anti-immigrant parties and their frequent defence of the national culture as a 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation, meaning that what used to be one of the strengths of the Christian democrats now renders them more vulnerable to populist appeals (Bornschier 2010). While religious voters in the past have shown some immunity to the appeals of the radical right (Arzheimer and Carter 2009), this is by no means a guarantee that in the current reconfiguration of the cultural and economic dimension this immunity will hold.

Somewhat paradoxically, Liberal parties have proven a cradle of many illiberal, anti-immigrant populist entrepreneurs, who campaign for policies that are diametrically opposed to free-market economics and social liberalism. Populists emerging from liberal parties, like Haider, Wilders and Dedecker, have all abandoned the principles of their liberal roots by campaigning for measures in favour of economic protection, against free trade and open borders, against the free movement of people, goods and services, in favour of more (electronic and digital) surveillance, restrictions on religious freedom and on limits to freedom of speech, expression and appearance. Clearly, there is a core of authoritarian illiberalism inside liberal movements that often erupts and breaks away into a new populist competitor. Normally, liberals are enthusiastic defenders of the free market, combined with a deeply held belief that the state should stay out of the boardroom as well as out the bedroom. At the same time, liberals (and their illiberal brethren) do share many of the cultural values of the anti-immigrant populists: national pride or even outright nationalism, national sovereignty and strong national defence, the desire for strict law and order, aversion to (state-funded) religious education, to name but a few. This clearly means there are many ideological angles, which renders liberal parties electorally vulnerable to populist rivalry.

Finally, conservative parties, especially those that traditionally adopt a convincing cross-class, traditional, authoritarian and nationalist appeal, should theoretically be even more vulnerable electorally to the appeal of populists, in the sense that the ideological gap between 'their' voters and the latter is already small. Voters may be tempted to cross if they suspect that the conservative party is softening its stance, possibly in order to get into government or as the result of the compromises that governing itself inevitable makes.

Given the above, it should be clear that none of the major mainstream party families—or ideologies—are electorally fully immune to the populist intrusion

into European party systems. The mainstream left is vulnerable because populists appeal to their core electorates by promising economic protection of the most precarious economic groups against 'undeserving' immigrant groups, while the centre right's voter base erodes due to the cultural appeal of populists that incorporates elements of (economic) nationalism, social traditionalism, defence of national sovereignty and borders, an emphasis on internal law and order and the Judeo-Christian national culture. Due to the hybrid economic appeal of populists and their strong emphasis on economic as well as cultural protectionism, all mainstream political parties will have some ideological overlap with them, and thus face possible voter defection. However, there will be substantial variation between parties of different origins, due to the composition of their voter base and their programmatic overlap. In particular liberal, conservative, Christian Democratic parties, but also social democratic parties that aim to represent broad sections of society and multiple social interests, will be most vulnerable due to the many 'entry points' populist will have into the hearts and minds of their wide-ranging electoral coalitions.

Methodology

To assess the levels to which the different political parties are vulnerable to anti-immigrant populist competition, we use the European Election Study (EES) from 2014. The 2014 EES dataset was collected immediately after the European Parliamentary election that year, using random samples of voters in each of the EU member states. The study is extensively documented on the European Elections Studies (EES) website (http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net). Due to the level of coordination in both questionnaire and sample methodologies, EES datasets are highly suitable for comparative research, as has been demonstrated in various studies (e.g. Van der Brug et al. 2005b; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). In this study we analyse ten different countries that have a significant anti-immigrant populist party: the UK, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy and Greece.

We use vote propensity scores to assess the electoral vulnerability of parties. The propensity-to-vote (PTV) measure was developed to better gauge party preferences in multi-party systems (van der Eijk 2002; van der Eijk et al. 2006; van der Eijk and Marsh 2007). The PTV provides more than just the final party choice; it also helps reveal the 'political DNA' of voters by tapping into the extent to which a citizen could vote for each of the parties competing in an election.

Voters are asked how likely it is that they will "ever vote" for each of the parties, where 0 stands for "not likely at all", and 10 stands for "very likely".

We assess the electoral vulnerability of parties through regression analysis using the propensity to vote for populist parties as the dependent variable. The analysis takes the form of a stacked model, which includes three models that aim to predict the propensity to vote for a populist party in a given country. Taking this vote propensity for a populist party, we first regress this PTV against the structural variables (age, gender and educational attainment), to control for the effect of the predictor variables in the models that follow. The second model uses as independent variables the voting propensities of respondents for all other parties in the national party system (included in the EES dataset). This tells us how much an increase in one point in the PTV of a non-populist party affects the PTV of the populist party. The third model includes variables measuring the political orientation of respondents in terms of left and right self-placement and their level of scepticism towards European integration, which are introduced into the model as two separate predictor variables.

The variables used in the regression analysis were taken from the 2014 EES survey, which collects information regarding age, gender and educational attainment (the number of years for each respondent to complete formal education). The EES data also provides the vote propensities of each respondent for all the major political parties in their national party system. The political orientation variable was obtained through a question in the survey in which respondents were asked to position themselves on a scale from 0 to 10, in which 0 is "left" and 10 is "right". To measure Euroscepticism, we created an index using six items from the EES dataset. These include the item if the EU is going in the "right or wrong direction" (d72_2), "EU membership is good or bad" (qp7), "trust in the institutions of the European union" (qp6_2), "EU Parliament considers concerns of EU citizens" (qp6_4), "Feeling a citizen of the EU" (qp6_3) and the "attitude towards European unification" (qpp18). All trust and Euroscepticism items were recoded, so that lower scores measure a lower degree of Euroscepticism and higher scores measure a higher degree of Euroscepticism.

Results

Table 1, based on 2014 EES data spanning European Parliamentary Elections across the 12 European countries included in this study, shows that, while no party family is entirely immune to their national populist challengers, the voter base of European centre-right parties, particularly of Christian democratic and

Table 1 Determinants explaining vote propensities for populist parties across Europe. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.13*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
Age	−0.02*** (0.00)			−0.05*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.10*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
Social democrats		−0.11*** (0.00)		−0.08*** (0.00)
Vote propensity for Conservatives		−0.03*** (0.00)		−0.09*** (0.00)
Christian democrats		0.08*** (0.00)		0.08*** (0.00)
Environmentalists		−0.24*** (0.00)		−0.19*** (0.00)
Liberals		0.06*** (0.00)		0.04*** (0.00)
New Left		0.05*** (0.00)		0.09*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.21*** (0.00)	0.21*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.19*** (0.00)	0.19*** (0.00)
R^2	0.03	0.11	0.15	0.15

EES 2014 $p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$. Party families are based on categorisation/historiographies in Krouwel (2012)

liberal origin, is most vulnerable to the appeal of populists. The highest positive coefficient between vote propensities with the anti-immigrant populists is found for Christian democratic voters across Europe, closely followed by liberal parties, from which many populist competitors have emerged. Note, however, that among the centre-right parties it is conservative parties that seem least affected. Even though conservative voters have been shown to support anti-immigrant competitors at times, the overall coefficient for them is negative, suggesting—perhaps surprisingly—that many conservative voters are actually very unlikely to vote for anti-immigrant parties.

Similarly, the left is also far from uniformly affected by populist mobilisation. While voters for green, environmentalist parties seem least likely to pay attention to anti-immigration appeals (evidenced by a strong negative and significant

coefficient), voters inclined to support the radical socialist left are much more sympathetic to populist anti-immigration parties. Clearly, supporters of radical-left socialist parties are also attracted to the 'other side' of the political spectrum. We find that vote propensities for the radical (new) left are positively correlated to voting for the anti-immigrant right. In fact, in the full model the positive coefficient between radical left and anti-immigrant voting actually increases. That left and right extremists look more alike than usually assumed is, perhaps, understandable when one looks at their respective mindsets (see van Prooijen and Krouwel 2019).

While much has been written about the appeal of populist parties to social democratic voters, overall the propensity to support social democratic parties is negatively correlated to supporting the populist competitor. This means that, despite the well-documented vote transfer from social democrats to populists, many of those who support the centre left are not inclined to switch to the anti-immigrant right.

These overall findings are consistent with the assumption that the centre-right is most vulnerable to voter defection to the anti-immigrant right, more than the centre-left. Yet within each block there are substantial differences and for many parties the coefficient is so weak that one must be careful not to make too many sweeping generalisations. That said, when we look at the overall coefficient between political orientation (left-right self-placement), we do find a strong negative and significant coefficient, meaning that left-wing voters are much less inclined than right-wing voters to support the anti-immigrant populists in their national political system. Finally, another important finding—consistent with earlier studies—is that the more right-wing and Eurosceptic voters are, the more likely they are to vote for a populist party. Delving deeper into structural explanations, we also regressed background variables (age, educational attainment and gender) with vote propensities for populist parties. Here we see a familiar pattern: women are less likely to support anti-immigrant populists; younger and lower educated voters are more likely to support them.

Alongside these overall findings, it is important to look at country-specific patterns. If we look first at the United Kingdom, then Table 2 reveals an overall familiar pattern in terms of the direction of the regression coefficients of the left: both Labour voters and those supporting the Green Party are less inclined to support UKIP as their vote propensity for these left-wing parties increases. In fact, voters for all political parties, bar one, produce negative coefficients between vote propensities, and that includes the Conservative Party and UKIP. This is perhaps surprising, given the tradition of vote transfer between the two: UKIP's vote collapsed between the 2015 and 2017 elections as some UKIP voters opted for

Table 2 Determinants explaining vote propensities for UKIP in UK. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party Model	Left/Right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.03*** (0.00)			−0.01*** (0.00)
Age	−0.07*** (0.00)			−0.14*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.25*** (0.00)			−0.17*** (0.00)
Vote propensity for Conservatives		−0.04*** (0.00)		0.09*** (0.00)
Labour		−0.22*** (0.00)		−0.16*** (0.00)
LibDems		−0.06*** (0.00)		−0.01*** (0.00)
Greens		−0.11*** (0.00)		−0.09*** (0.00)
SNP		−0.01*** (0.00)		−0.01*** (0.00)
Plaid		0.08*** (0.00)		0.07*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.16*** (0.00)	0.16*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.21*** (0.00)	0.21*** (0.00)
R^2	0.03	0.07	0.15	0.15

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party; but many more went (back) to the Tories after result of the EU referendum appeared (at least temporarily) to rob Nigel Farage's insurgency of its *raison d'être* (see Cowley and Kavanagh 2018). However, that negative coefficient serves as a reminder of the limits of UKIP's effort to render itself a respectable alternative in the eyes of many Tory voters—something that may or may not turn out to be true of Farage's next project, The Brexit Party. Predictably enough, a more right-wing orientation and anti-EU attitudes increase the likelihood of voting for UKIP. Structural effects—age, gender and educational attainment—are all, incidentally, in the expected direction, showing that women and more highly educated voters are less likely to support UKIP, while we find again that younger voters are slightly more inclined to vote UKIP.

Crossing the channel, we see a telling pattern in the Netherlands. Dutch politics has, particularly since 2002, been characterised by many new parties entering parliament successfully in elections, resulting in exceptionally high electoral

volatility (Mair 2008; Krouwel and Lucardie 2008; Krouwel 2012). The first point to note is the almost equally high positive coefficients for both the right-wing liberal VVD and the left-wing Socialist Party. The attraction the populist appeal has for centre-right VVD voters is not surprising, bearing in mind that Wilders' PVV broke away from the VVD in 2005. Clearly, many potential VVD voters are tempted by the PVV, which probably explains why the VVD based much of its 2017 election campaign on aping, albeit in diluted form, Wilders' anti-immigrant rhetoric. The highest negative coefficient—implying the strongest immunity against populist mobilisation—applies to supporters of the progressive liberal D66, suggesting that any vulnerability to populism may not lie in liberalism itself, but in right-wing illiberalism. The Christian democratic CDA has a negative coefficient, showing that, among right-wing voters, substantially different sentiments towards anti-immigrant populist politics exist. On the left we find an equally wide variation in direction and strength of coefficients between vote propensities for the left-wing parties and the PVV. We find high levels of popularity of anti-immigrant right-wing populism among voters of the radical left Socialist Party, which also adopts an anti-EU stance when it comes to open borders, labour migration and the impact of these aspects on wages and welfare state provisions. Both PVV and SP offer voters a policy mix of economic and cultural protectionism, albeit a somewhat different one. The voter base of the social democratic PvdA shows a much lower inclination to support the PVV. Similarly, negative attitudes towards right-wing anti-immigrant populism are found among supporters of the environmentalist GroenLinks (Otjes and Krouwel 2015) (Table 3).

The Dutch case also allows us to assess differences within Christian democracy as the open electoral systems results in three denominational parties entering parliament. Adhering to Christian democratic principles—or at least voting for denominational parties—seems to reduce the propensity to vote for anti-immigrant populism somewhat, as shown by the negative coefficients of CDA and CU voters. That said, the coefficient for CDA voters is rather low, indicating that some sympathy for the PVV exists among their voter base. Unfortunately, the EES did not allow for the inclusion of the confessional-fundamentalist SGP, whose voters are attracted by the anti-Islam agenda of Geert Wilders' PVV (see Otjes and Krouwel forthcoming). Overall there is substantial variation within the liberal camp (hence the strong contrast between VVD and D66 voters) as well as on the left of the political spectrum (between SP voters versus PvdA and GreenLeft voters). Additional studies have shown that voters for other anti-establishment parties, such the pensioners' party 50PLUS, are also highly susceptible to anti-immigrant populist appeals (see Otjes and Krouwel 2017). Structural effects of age, gender and educational attainment are less complex and more aligned

Table 3 Determinants explaining vote propensities for PVV in the Netherlands in 2014. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party Model	Left/Right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.06*** (0.00)			−0.01*** (0.00)
Age	−0.18*** (0.00)			−0.13*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.18*** (0.00)			−0.05*** (0.00)
VVD		0.13*** (0.00)		0.04*** (0.00)
PvdA		−0.14*** (0.00)		−0.06*** (0.00)
SP		0.14*** (0.00)		0.19*** (0.00)
CDA		−0.03*** (0.00)		−0.03*** (0.00)
D66		−0.26*** (0.00)		−0.22*** (0.00)
CU		−0.07*** (0.00)		−0.09*** (0.00)
GL		−0.13*** (0.00)		−0.05*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.27*** (0.00)	0.27*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.18*** (0.00)	0.18*** (0.00)
R^2	0.04	0.18	0.24	0.24

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

with previous findings: women, older and more highly educated voters are less likely to vote for the PVV than male, lower educated voters among the younger generations. Finally, Dutch voters conform to the pattern that right-wing voters with anti-EU inclinations are more likely to vote for the PVV.

The German party system showed, until recently, relative resilience to populist appeals. However, in the 2013 and 2017 elections, voters shifted away from the major political parties. Both the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) received their lowest combined vote share since the Second World War in the 2017 elections. This election saw the return to parliament of the FDP, a long term political force in Germany that lost all its seats in 2013 after the party had been represented continuously since 1949 and had been part of twenty centre-right and centre-left governments. However, the FDP was beaten into third place by the populist radical right newcomer, the AfD. Obviously, the AfD appeals to mainstream voters, as per Table 4, where voters of Die Linke and the

Table 4 Determinants explaining vote propensities for AfD in Germany. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.09***(0.00)			−0.04*** (0.00)
Age	−0.07*** (0.00)			−0.01*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.01*** (0.00)			0.04*** (0.00)
CDU/CSU		−0.10*** (0.00)		−0.12*** (0.00)
SPD		−0.10***		−0.06*** (0.00)
FDP		0.22*** (0.00)		0.20*** (0.00)
Grünen		−0.16*** (0.00)		−0.12*** (0.00)
Die Linke		0.08*** (0.00)		0.14*** (0.00)
Piraten		0.11*** (0.00)		0.09*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.22*** (0.00)	0.23*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.18*** (0.00)	0.18*** (0.00)
R^2	0.01	0.09	0.16	0.16

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

liberal FDP appear to be most attracted to their anti-immigrant populist appeal, similar to the Dutch pattern. Again, there is wide variation within the centre-right: the liberal FDP would appear most vulnerable, while the Christian democratic CDU/CSU seems far less so. German left-wing parties also show such variation, as we find low levels of possible voter defection towards the AfD among supporters of the social democratic SPD and Die Grünen, while the support base of the radical left party Die Linke is much more inclined to vote for the AfD. Voters for the Christian democratic CDU resemble the social democratic voter base in their disposition towards supporting the anti-immigrant AfD, suggesting that voters of the two mainstream parties are less likely to switch to the anti-immigrant AfD than supporters of Die Linke and FDP. Having an overall right-wing political orientation and being Eurosceptic substantially increases the likelihood of voting AfD, while being male, lower educated and younger also increases AfD support.

In Austria we analyse two parties that are usually lumped together under the populist category: BZÖ and FPÖ. The BZÖ was a breakaway from the FPÖ,

initiated by Jörg Haider, gaining immediate government participation (as it replaced the FPÖ in a right-wing coalition with the ÖVP) and won almost 11% of the votes in the 2008 elections. Only a few days after this election, Haider was killed in a car accident and the party has since withered away. We include it here as the regression analyses of BZÖ and FPÖ show an interesting contrast. In 2014, the voter base of all parties shows at least some inclination to support BZÖ, thereby transcending the traditional deeply adversarial political 'Lager' in Austrian politics. When we, however, regress the vote propensity for the FPÖ against the vote propensities for other parties, all coefficients turn negative (except for BZÖ voters). While the coefficients for the left show lower proclivities for supporting anti-immigrant populism, these are differences in degree, not direction. This pattern seems highly partisan, indicating an 'anti-FPÖ' stance among voters for other parties more than anything else. Notwithstanding, regressing the political orientation of voters against support for the FPÖ still reveals that right-wing voters are more prone to anti-immigrant populism's appeal than left-wing voters, so much so that it is nested deeply into mainstream centre-right politics in Austria. In fact, both the FPÖ (when it was under Haider's leadership) and more recently the ÖVP (under Kurz) have strongly emphasised anti-immigrant stances. The effect of Eurosceptic attitudes is weak, but in the expected direction. In Austria there is very strong effect of education and age, indicating that much more than elsewhere younger generations and the less well educated support anti-immigration politics (Tables 5, 6 and 7).

The 2017 French presidential and parliamentary elections saw the spectacular rise of *En Marche*, a new party founded only months before the elections by Emanuel Macron. He not only won the presidency, but *En Marche* also gained 28% of the vote, including a large majority, in the National Assembly. The two traditionally major political forces in France—the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and the *Gaullists* (*Les Républicains*) saw their vote shares collapse. Over the last two decades, the French party system transformed into one of 'tripartisme', with a strong showing of the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim *Front National*. When we regress the vote propensity for the FN against vote propensities for other parties, we find negative coefficients for all parties, with the exception of supporters of the right-wing conservative (Gaullist) *Debout la République* and among supporters of the radical left *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* (NPA). Again we see this pattern that the most radical parties on both the left and right (conservative) end of the political spectrum resemble one another in their support for populist anti-immigration politics. As was expected, the supporters of the centre-right UMP are more inclined to vote for the FN than supporters of the socialists, greens or the centrist UDI/Modem. Similarly, a study of the 2017 presidential elections revealed that voters

Table 5 Determinants explaining vote propensities for FPÖ in the Austria in 2014. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.04*** (0.00)			−0.04 (0.20)
Age	−0.23*** (0.00)			−0.22*** (0.07)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.27*** (0.00)			−0.18*** (0.14)
ÖVP		−0.14*** (0.00)		−0.17*** (0.00)
SPÖ		−0.17*** (0.00)		−0.08*** (0.00)
NEOS		−0.10*** (0.00)		−0.10*** (0.00)
Grunen		−0.28*** (0.00)		−0.19*** (0.04)
BZÖ		0.37*** (0.00)		0.34*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.29*** (0.05)	0.29*** (0.05)
Euroscepticism			0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
R^2	0.09	0.36	0.42	0.42

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

supporting conservative and right-wing candidates (Francois Fillon, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan), as well as anti-establishment candidates from both right and left (Jacques Cheminade and Jean-Luc Mélenchon), were also most likely to consider voting for the FN (Vitiello et al 2017).

The most profound party system transformation occurred in Italy after a de facto system collapse in the early 1990s, which led to the disappearance of many of the major parties that dominated the Italian political landscape since the Second World War. Italy now hosts the most successful anti-system party, *Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)*, which gained the largest share of the popular vote in the 2013 and the 2018 elections. In Italy, we analyse vote propensities for the populist party *Lega Nord* as well as for the anti-establishment party M5S. As Tables 8 and 9 show, voters of the centre-left PD are most immune to the appeal of Lega and M5S. Voters who are keen on Berlusconi's Forza Italia seem much more sympathetic toward the Lega Nord (LN), but are much more negative towards the anti-establishment M5S. That the Lega is a different political entity than M5S is also clear from the overall effects of left-right political orientation and Eurosceptic

Table 6 Determinants explaining vote propensities for BZÖ in Austria. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	0.01*** (0.00)			0.04*** (0.00)
Age	−0.21*** (0.00)			0.10*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.18*** (0.10)			0.11*** (0.00)
OVP		0.17*** (0.00)		0.16*** (0.00)
SPO		0.10*** (0.00)		0.09*** (0.00)
NEOS		0.17*** (0.00)		0.18*** (0.00)
Grunen		0.07*** (0.00)		0.05*** (0.00)
FPO		0.43*** (0.00)		0.45*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			−0.04*** (0.00)	−0.04*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			−0.05*** (0.00)	−0.05*** (0.00)
R^2	0.05	0.23	0.24	0.24

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

attitudes: right voters show higher inclinations to support the anti-immigrant Lega, but for M5S this effect reverses with more left-wing voters being attracted to the appeal of M5S. However, Table 9 also shows that M5S supporters do not reject the populist appeal of Lega (the coefficient between the two vote propensities is zero). Similarly, lukewarm mutual attitudes can be found in Table 8. Apparently, being against the political establishment makes two options appealing—the LN and M5S—where more left-wing voters support the latter and right-wing voters are more likely to cast their ballot for the Lega. The three-way rift then is between the left-wing voter base of the PD (centre-right) supporters of Forza Italia and those voters that support (one or more) of the three 'anti-system' parties. An examination of the effects of age, gender and education reveals the usual pattern for education (the less educated are more likely to support both the populist parties, as well as the anti-establishment party) and for gender (men more inclined to support populist and anti-establishment parties), but there is a difference in generational support for the Lega compared to M5S. While the latter attracts younger voters, the Lega mobilises an older voter base.

Table 7 Determinants explaining vote propensities for FN in France. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.05*** (0.00)			0.04*** (0.00)
Age	−0.27*** (0.00)			−0.13*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.20*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
UMP		−0.04*** (0.00)		−0.21*** (0.04)
PS		−0.26*** (0.00)		−0.05*** (0.00)
EELV		−0.05*** (0.00)		−0.03*** (0.00)
FdG		−0.07*** (0.00)		0.10*** (0.00)
UDI/MoDem		−0.12*** (0.00)		−0.13*** (0.00)
DLR		0.30*** (0.00)		0.25*** (0.00)
NPA		0.02*** (0.00)		0.05*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.55*** (0.00)	0.55*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.13** (0.00)	0.13** (0.00)
R^2	0.05	0.24	0.39	0.39

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

Greece experienced several periods of profound party system restructuring in the post-war period, the most recent shift occurring in the period 2012–2015 when a radical Marxist-socialist party, *SYRIZA,* was swept into power and the far-right Golden Dawn gained popular support in both the 2012 and 2015 elections. Table 10 regresses the vote propensities for other parties in the Greek system against the propensity to vote for Golden Dawn, which is at a minimum an anti-immigrant party, while others would even label it a neo-Nazi or fascist party (Xenakis 2012; or see Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Golden Dawns' extremism causes only voters of AE (Independent Greeks) and to a much lesser extent voters supporting To Potami (The River) to be positively inclined to vote for Golden Dawn. That said, in general, those who vote for right-wing parties are much more likely to consider voting for Golden Dawn, as evidenced by the coefficient of the centre right New Democracy, as can be evidenced by the strong positive coefficient with a right-wing orientation. Voters for parties on

Table 8 Determinants explaining vote propensities for M5S in Italy. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euro-scep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.04*** (0.00)			−0.06*** (0.00)
Age	−0.22*** (0.00)			−0.15*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.16*** (0.00)			−0.12*** (0.00)
PD		−0.32*** (0.00)		−0.39*** (0.05)
Fi		−0.22*** (0.00)		−0.15*** (0.00)
LN		−0.00 *** (0.00)		0.03*** (0.00)
UDC		0.18*** (0.00)		0.19*** (0.00)
SEL		0.20*** (0.00)		0.17*** (0.00)
NCD		−0.01*** (0.00)		−0.00*** (0.00)
Fratelli		0.10*** (0.00)		0.11*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			−0.22*** (0.00)	−0.22*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.10*** (0.00)	0.10*** (0.00)
R^2	0.05	0.19	0.22	0.22

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

the left (SYRIZA, PASOK, DIMAR and KKE) and centre-right (ND) all have (weak) negative coefficients with the likelihood to vote for Golden Dawn. However, in the overall model most of these effects reverse for the KKE, PASOK and SYRIZA. With respect to Euroscepticism we see the familiar effect, in that more negative attitudes towards Europe lead to a higher inclination to support the nationalist Golden Dawn, which is also more appealing to male, less educated and younger voters.

The Swedish case reveals a familiar pattern when we regress vote propensities for other parties against the propensity to vote for the anti-immigrant, populist *Sverigedemokraterna* (Sweden Democrats). The only two parties with a voter base that generates a positive coefficient are found on the political right: the Christian democratic *Kristdemokraterna* (KD) and the conservative *Moderata Samlingspartiet* (M). Voter groups that support left-wing parties in Sweden (SAP, MP, VP) all have negative coefficients with the likelihood to vote for the

Table 9 Determinants explaining vote propensities for LN in Italy. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	0.03*** (0.00)			0.04*** (0.00)
Age	0.07*** (0.00)			0.11*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.11*** (0.00)			−0.00*** (0.00)
PD		−0.18*** (0.00)		−0.13*** (0.00)
Fi		0.18*** (0.00)		0.15*** (0.00)
M5S		−0.00*** (0.00)		0.02*** (0.00)
UDC		0.11*** (0.00)		0.10*** (0.00)
SEL		0.10*** (0.00)		0.11*** (0.00)
NCD		0.19*** (0.00)		0.18*** (0.00)
Fratelli		0.21*** (0.00)		0.21*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.11*** (0.00)	0.11*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			−0.07*** (0.00)	−0.07*** (0.00)
R^2	0.01	0.43	0.43	0.44

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

anti-immigrant party. Note that in Sweden, as in the Netherlands and Germany, the centre-right is split, with the supporters of the moderate-right Centerpartiet (C) and the liberal FP both showing less inclination to support the Sweden Democrats than voters for the other right-wing parties (KD and M). Overall, being right-wing in Sweden does increase the propensity to support the Sweden Democrats, as does Euroscepticism, being less educated and being male. Age has a very low association with support for the Sweden Democrats (Table 11).

The greater propensity of right-wing voters to support populist anti-immigration parties emerges again in Denmark. However, within the right of the Danish political spectrum there is substantial variation, with likely voters of the liberal *Venstre* (V) being much more prone to defect to the populist *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) than voters of the *Konservative Folkeparti* (KF) and the *Liberal Alliance* (LA). While the voters of parties on the left (the Social Democrats, Socialist People's Party and Radikale Venstre) are much less likely to support the populists,

Table 10 Determinants explaining vote propensities for AE-XA in Greece. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.09*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
Age	−0.17*** (0.00)			−0.16*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.15*** (0.00)			−0.05*** (0.00)
ND		−0.02*** (0.00)		−0.13*** (0.00)
SYRIZA		−0.10*** (0.00)		0.04*** (0.00)
PASOK		−0.03*** (0.00)		0.02*** (0.00)
AE/ANEL		0.22*** (0.00)		0.16*** (0.00)
DL/DIMAR		−0.06*** (0.00)		−0.04*** (0.00)
KKE		−0.05*** (0.00)		0.12*** (0.00)
To Potami		0.02*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.54*** (0.06)	0.54*** (0.06)
Euroscepticism			0.16*** (0.10)	0.16*** (0.10)
R^2	0.03	0.08	0.26	0.26

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

voters of the radical left People's Movement against the EU (*Folkebevægelsen mod EU*) are more likely to consider doing so. Despite this variation within the left and right, being politically right-wing and Eurosceptic does increase one's propensity to vote for the DF, while higher education and being a female reduces it. The effect of age on supporting populism is very low in Denmark.

Finnish politics is also characterised by a pattern of variation within both the left- and right-wing party blocs. While on the right, voters of the liberal *Keskusta* (Kesk) and the Christian democratic *Kristillisdemokraatit* (KD) display a propensity to support the populist *Perussuomalaiset* (True Finns and now the Finns), voters of another right-wing party—KOK—actually produce a negative coefficient. On the left, we see a similar division between voters of the social democratic SDP and the Greens—whose vote propensities are negatively associated with voting for the populists—and the radical left *Vasemmistoliitto* (Vas) whose voters also seem much more likely to have a positive attitude towards the True Finns. Interestingly, the voter

Table 11 Determinants explaining vote propensities for SD in Sweden. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.15*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
Age	−0.01*** (0.00)			−0.08*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.11*** (0.00)			−0.09*** (0.00)
SP		−0.13*** (0.00)		−0.09*** (0.00)
M		0.02*** (0.00)		−0.08*** (0.00)
MP		−0.18*** (0.00)		−0.15*** (0.00)
FP		−0.10*** (0.00)		−0.10*** (0.00)
C		−0.13*** (0.00)		−0.14*** (0.00)
KD		0.06*** (0.00)		0.05*** (0.00)
VP		−0.08*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.30*** (0.00)	0.30*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.12*** (0.00)	0.12*** (0.00)
R^2	0.04	0.14	0.18	0.18

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

base of the Swedish People's Party of Finland (SFP, taken jointly with the regionalist Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue RKP) is not as negative as one might assume given that the SFP represents a linguistic minority and True Finns are a nationalist party (Table 12).

Conclusion and Discussion

Recent elections have resulted in significant changes in the party composition of European party systems. Amidst declining levels of partisan identification, increased levels of volatility and ongoing fragmentation, we seem to be witnessing the long-term structural decline of social and Christian democratic people's parties and the emergence of multiple new and successful populist parties, especially (but not exclusively) on the nationalist radical right. Despite the fact that

Table 12 Determinants explaining vote propensities for DF in Denmark. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.18*** (0.00)			−0.12*** (0.00)
Age	0.02*** (0.00)			−0.02*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.06*** (0.00)			−0.03*** (0.00)
SD		−0.18*** (0.00)		−0.14*** (0.04)
V		0.14*** (0.00)		0.09*** (0.00)
SF		−0.19*** (0.04)		−0.11*** (0.00)
RV		−0.18*** (0.04)		−0.13*** (0.00)
LA		0.01*** (0.00)		−0.03*** (0.00)
KF		0.00*** (0.00)		−0.03*** (0.00)
FEU		0.12*** (0.00)		0.13*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.28*** (0.00)	0.28*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.14*** (0.00)	0.14*** (0.00)
R^2	0.03	0.27	0.33	0.33

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

voters on the right are generally more inclined to support anti-immigrant politics than left-wing voters, centre-right liberal parties (where they have avoided splits at least) and conservative parties have actually fared better electorally, despite their vulnerability to voter defection. Nevertheless, this study suggests that even support for these parties may actually be more fragile than it looks.

The purpose of this study was to discover whether there was variation in the extent to which individual traditional political parties and party families are vulnerable in terms of electoral competition from populist parties. It turns out that there is. We found that the core electorates of the centre-right parties overall have higher levels of sympathy, and subsequent high vote propensity, for populist anti-immigrant parties. While this suggests that Christian democrat, conservative and liberal parties are most vulnerable, we have actually seen some inevitable variation between different countries but more importantly within party blocks in

national party systems on both the right and left. At the same time, we found that, broadly conceived, the left is less vulnerable to populist competition, with relatively smaller proportions of their potential voters confessing high vote propensities for populist parties. However, within the left-wing blocs in several European party systems we saw that supporters for the radical left are often as enthusiastic about anti-immigrant politics as voters on the right. Among voters of the radical left parties, such as the Dutch SP, the German *Die Linke* and *La France Insoumise*, but also among the radical left voter base in Denmark and Finland there is substantial appetite for the policies suggested by right-wing populists. While the leaders of the radical left often display a high degree of hostility towards right-wing and anti-immigrant populists—and vice versa—and reject each other's political ideologies, policy proposals and sense of morality, some voters for these two party families nevertheless have some mutual sympathy (Table 13).

Table 13 Determinants explaining vote propensities for PS in Finland. Regression coefficients

	Structural	Party model	Left/right—Euroscep	Overall
	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)	Beta (SE)
Gender	−0.14*** (0.00)			−0.12*** (0.00)
Age	−0.06*** (0.00)			−0.10*** (0.00)
Education (years as full-time occupation)	−0.10*** (0.00)			−0.11*** (0.00)
KoK		−0.07*** (0.00)		−0.02*** (0.00)
KD		0.22*** (0.00)		0.22*** (0.00)
SDP		−0.07*** (0.00)		−0.05*** (0.00)
Kesk		0.14*** (0.00)		0.11*** (0.00)
SFP/RKP		−0.01*** (0.00)		−0.03*** (0.00)
Vihr		−0.12*** (0.00)		−0.08*** (0.00)
Vas		0.15*** (0.00)		0.13*** (0.00)
Left/right placement			0.05*** (0.07)	0.05*** (0.00)
Euroscepticism			0.29*** (0.08)	0.29*** (0.00)
R^2	0.03	0.13	0.20	0.20

EES 2014 ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

All this poses three interesting and, indeed, vital questions for further research—one to do with the difference between vulnerability in theory and vulnerability in practice, one to do with the centre-right and one concerning with the centre-left.

The difference between theory and practice is essentially the difference between people expressing a propensity and actual behaviour. Let us take Germany as an example. Our PTV analysis suggested that FDP voters were more likely than other voters to consider voting for the AfD. Yet voter stream analyses have shown that the AfD won most support from former non-voters, followed by former CDU voters and former SPD voters. True, *Die Linke* suffered losses to the AfD, as our PTV analysis might also have predicted. But the FDP? The fact that it did not should prompt further research into why that was the case. Does it cast doubt on PTV as a predictor? Did contingency play a role during the election? Or is there, perhaps, something that parties can do to prevent potential defections from being realised in reality? To put it another way, our data suggests that some mainstream parties' voters should be easier prey for populist parties but that does not automatically mean that the consequent vulnerability that implies for those parties will actually result in them being damaged. Why in some cases they are damaged where in others they are not is worth more detailed investigation, probably via more qualitative, case-study methods.

On the centre-right, why is it that, given parties in that part of the political spectrum would seem to be so vulnerable, have they—so far at least—been less damaged by the populist radical right than their centre-left counterparts? Or is that an illusion? Are the electoral losses that centre-right parties have suffered masked by the fact that their famously greater pragmatism and willingness to do deals (sometimes with the radical right) to hold on to office means they continue to do so in spite of these losses?

As for the centre-left, it is clearly possible that relatively few voters who now vote for it are tempted by the populist radical right because they are effectively the hard core that remains now that so many former centre-left voters have departed for pastures new. But if that is not the case—and we need to remember that there are still considerably more people who would consider voting centre-left than actually do so right now—then we need to look beyond, or at least supplement, fashionable explanations of decline that rely heavily on the notion that social democratic parties have been haemorrhaging support to populist radical right appeals to their erstwhile voters' cultural conservatism. This is not to deny that this has been the case. Rather, it is to suggest that something else is probably going on too. Culture clearly matters but, as other researchers have noted (see, for example Evans and Tilley 2017), when it comes to the decline of the centre-left, representational and distributional issues continue to matter as well.

One other matter merits additional probing. Our analyses of the more structural explanations of support for the anti-immigrant right holds little surprises with regard to educational attainments and gender: male and lower educated voters are more likely to vote for anti-immigrant populist parties. However, concerning the generational effect we find that in some countries young people have a higher likelihood of supporting populist parties, although often these effects are very low indeed. Note that the literature on the anti-immigrant right is inconclusive regarding the effect of age on populist-party support. Several studies also found low and insignificant effects of age (Giebler and Regel 2018; Oesch 2008; Ivarsflaten and Stubager 2012; Spruyt et al. 2016), while others determined younger voters to be more likely to support populists (Spierings and Zaslove 2017; Rooduijn 2018; Lubbers et al. 2002). There are also studies that actually find the opposite, namely that older people have a higher tendency to vote for populists (Arzheimer 2009; Arzheimer and Carter 2009; Van der Brug and Mughan 2007). These differences can easily result from the fact that anti-immigration parties have very different origins and ideological orientations, effects of party leaders, differences in the overall party system format and—most importantly—opponents, among many other possible factors. Understanding who abandons traditional politics and why these voters then shift their support to anti-establishment, anti-immigration populist parties is much more complex than many pundits—or populists for that matter—want us to believe.

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